

Title	<b>Staying Sane... Around Others</b>
Text	<b>Philippians 2:11-4</b>
Date	24 January 2021



The questions below are designed to be used by OCC LIFEGroups as they meet during the week following the Sunday morning message. The intent is not for groups to answer every question, but for leaders to use the questions as a guide as they tailor the discussion to the unique needs of their group.

The Sunday message and these questions can be found each week at [occweb.org/sermons](http://occweb.org/sermons).

## OVERVIEW

If you were going to sit down and write a short description of what you wanted your future to look like, what words would you choose? Let me suggest four that come straight out of Paul's experience: *joy, confidence, hope, and life*. After musing over past events that brought him to prison, Paul looks ahead to his uncertain future. But these four words sum up what he expected his future to include – even if it meant his possible execution.

## TEXT

NIV	The Message	Good News Translation
Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.	If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care— then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.	Your life in Christ makes you strong, and his love comforts you. You have fellowship with the Spirit, and you have kindness and compassion for one another. I urge you, then, to make me completely happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and being one in soul and mind. Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves. And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### Introduction – connect with your group

Have you ever heard someone say “I’m looking out for number one!”?

What do you suppose they mean when they say that?

In the opening verses of Philippians 2 we are told to look to the interests of others, not ourselves, not “number one.” How does this run counter to the idea that we might not get enough?

### Looking at the Text

- Read Philippians 1:27-2:4
- Are there words, phrases or ideas that pastor Mike used that you didn’t understand?
- What is one thing that stuck out to you from the message?
- How do you see 1:27-30 linking to 2:1-4?
- 2:1-4 in the Greek is one long sentence, the apostle Paul uses what is called a protasis/apodosis structure – an if/then construction.

## The Basics of Relationships

The church is not a society of perfect people, but of redeemed people.

The word “if” in verse 1 can also be read as “since”: “Since you have any encouragement from being united with Christ”

### Negatively: What Not to Do with Others

- Don't Be Selfish
  - The Greek word for selfish ambition is *eritheia*. It means a divisive faction or a contention. Selfishness is the very heart of our fallen nature, the root of every other sin.
  - The “me” philosophy is in the heart of every child.
- Don't Be Proud
  - The Greek word for vain conceit is *kenodoxia*, a compound word meaning vain-glory or self-conceit. It holds the ideas of an exaggerated sense of our own importance.
  - There are two ways to enter a room: “Here I am”, or “There you are”. Paul entered the room the second way—as a bondservant.

### Positively: What to Do with Others

- Do Be Humble
  - The word used here is a compound word for a modest disposition, a humble mind.
  - Humility was something the ancient Greeks despised, and it is looked at unfavorably in our secular world as well.
  - Pride makes God your enemy, and humility makes God your friend.
- Do Be Respectful
  - The word for esteem is *hégeomai*. It means to consider, to account for, or to think of. The Message translates verse 4 as follows: “Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.”
  - When you put another person first and they put you first, your relationship will flourish.

### **Compare and contrast these two states of mind, negative and positive.**

- Discuss a time when someone you know was selfish and prideful toward you.  
How did you feel?
- Now share a time when someone was humble and respectful?  
How did this make you feel?
- How do humility and respect reflect Jesus?
- What are some practical ways to regard others as more important than you are?
- According to this passage what are some important characteristics of Christian community?
- For the joy of unity you must embrace the community (Philippians 1:27; 2:1-2). Agree or disagree?  
Why or why not?
- Paul doesn't say we should bring our thinking in line with each other.  
What does he say is the centre around which Christians unite?
- How does the comfort and encouragement that comes from unity move us toward unity with each other in Christ?
- If Jesus loving you has made a difference in your life, what difference has Jesus loving you made in other people's lives?
- Eugene Peterson wrote: "there can be no maturity in the spiritual life, no obedience in following Jesus, no wholeness in the Christian life apart from immersion and embrace of community. I am not myself by myself. Community, not the highly vaunted individualism of our culture, is the setting in which Christ is at play." What do you think this means? How have you seen this to be true in your life?
- Paul reminds us to think the same way on central matters. Why are tempted to make secondary or peripheral matters central?  
What are some potential consequences of making peripheral matters into central matters?
- Is there an area(s) in your own life where you could be more intentional about putting the needs of others before your own? Will you commit to working on those areas this week?

### **PRAY WITH EACH OTHER**

Pray for unity, among believers, centred on the love of Christ. Pray especially around the political and moral/ethical issues [i.e. responses to COVID-19, vaccines, MAiD – euthanasia, abortion, gender identity, and much more] that face our world. Ask the Lord to show you how to listen and speak so that reconciliation and healing is brought into people's lives.

### **THIS WEEK**

- Read the letter/book of Philippians – it's only 4 chapters.
- **Connect Up:**  
How should our relationship with the Lord influence our relationships with people?  
What are some similarities and differences between the two  
(e.g., God is perfect in His relationships and we are not)?
- **Connect In:**  
What are some key characteristics of our relationships with other believers?  
Look up these verses for insight: Romans 14:13; 15:7, 14; 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:2, 32; 5:19, 21; Colossians 3:13, 16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11.  
How can you look after someone's best interest this week?
- **Connect Out:**  
When developing relationships with nonbelievers, how can you lovingly share the gospel?  
Look up Matthew 5:16 and 1 Peter 3:15 to help you respond.